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The Ryedale Historian



The Ryedale Historian

A
PERIODICAL PUBLICATION
BY
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EDITOR

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EDITOR'S NOTE

"History", wrote Sir Maurice Bowra recently, "is too serious a subject to be left exclusively to professional historians." Hence, among other reasons, our reappearance in print. The History of Helmsley, Rievaulx & District, published for us by the Stonegate Press, York, two years ago, was received very kindly by reviewers. But perhaps what pleased us most was that, where they criticised it (justly enough in a few respects), they mostly did so without pulling their punches because we were amateurs; they treated us, that is, as fellow-historians - and this we take as a compliment. We fully intend to maintain, and even improve on, the standards we set ourselves in that first publication.

The compiling of the History had two principal effects for us. Firstly, considerations of space and proportion had meant leaving various tempting trails unfollowed or only briefly sniffed at. (One such was the question of medieval roads on the moors, of which a survey is at present being undertaken in collaboration with other societies.) Secondly, it gave us an appetite for practical historico-archaeological research. So now, with the broad lines already sketched in, we hope, in this series of The Ryedale Historian, to follow some of those neglected trails, at leisure and unrestricted by considerations other than the financial problem of getting into print at all. In this respect we acknowledge with gratitude a grant from the North Riding County Council which will help considerably to prime the financial pump. And we would also record very sincere acknowledgments to, among many, Miss A.G. Foster, B.A., Librarian of our parent society, the Archaeology Officer of the Ordnance Survey, the Librarians of Leeds Central and York Public Libraries, J.H. Svendgaard, lately custodian for the Ministry of Works at Byland Abbey, Capt. V.M. Wombwell of Newburgh Priory, the Executors of the late Earl of Feversham, and J. Weston Adamson Esq., of Oldstead Hall.

It so happens, perhaps not surprisingly considering how rich Ryedale is in relics of the Middle Ages, that this first issue of The Ryedale Historian is predominantly medieval, and indeed ecclesiastical, in subject-matter. But there is work in progress in other fields too, and we can confidently predict that subsequent issues will cover a variety of subjects ranging from querns and recent researches in the limestone fissures of the district known as 'Windypits', to aspects of comparatively recent parish history.

Topographically alert readers will notice, too, that we place a liberal interpretation on the term 'Ryedale'. Contributions in this first number cover ground between the head of Farndale, in the heart of the moors, and the environs of Easingwold. Readers may care to note that the Editor will welcome offers of contributions for future issues relating to any portion of the area within a radius of, say, 15-20 miles from Helmsley, always provided they are not more properly the concern of sister societies in neighbouring parts of the Riding. Maximum lengths at present, 4000 words: a preliminary letter is advisable.

It is also proposed to expand the section on 'Notes and Queries' which makes an embryonic bow in this issue. Readers' questions, letters, or short notes (up to about 250 words) on items of historical or archaeological interest, will be readily considered for publication in subsequent numbers.

JOHN McDONNELL

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STOP PRESS

The Umpteenth Mr. Wilson

Do you remember the former 14th Earl of Home's counter-joke about 'the 14th Mr. Wilson'? The Sunday Times (Atticus' column, March 7th, 1965) has now revealed the mole-like endeavours of a group of genealogists to trace the Prime Minister's family tree back fourteen generations. Our readers may be interested to note that we played our modest part in this historic piece of historical research by introducing Mr. Michael Heenan, of a Canterbury firm of genealogists, to the Duncombe Park Estate Office records. (Mr. Fox and the Editor have been busy for two years inventorying these documents.)

For reference, the Prime Minister's forebears lived in and around Helmsley from at least the 17th century - the earliest certain ancestor was James Wilson, yeoman of Sproxton, born about 1680 - until the middle of the 19th century, when Mr. Harold Wilson's great-grandfather, John Wilson, was master of the Helmsley Workhouse.

OUR COVER

The map reproduced on the cover is part of an early nineteenth century map of the North Riding. The original was published in 1835 by Henry Teesdale & Co., London, and Thos. Deacon & Co., Manchester, and is reproduced by permission of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, who kindly made their copy available to us for photographing.

NOTES ON THE
HISTORY OF FARNDALE IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

by

Arthur H. Whitaker

Farndale, and several of the farms mentioned in this study, are in the news as we go to press. The pre-war scheme for a dam across the dale to contain a massive reservoir, which has been lying dormant in the Hull Corporation files for some forty years, has been dusted off, and Hull, in collaboration with Sheffield, is now considering augmenting their water supplies by putting the Farndale scheme into operation. Exact details are hard to come by, but it seems that at least the top third of the dale, as far down as the hamlet of Church Houses, will be submerged behind a dam 130 ft. high. It is to be hoped that the stretch of the dale below this point, containing most of the famous wild daffodils, will remain accessible and habitable, but it is a sign of the times that apart from the noise, mess and muddle involved in an engineering project on this scale, we are likely to see a considerable portion of this most attractive and historically interesting of all our Dales vanish for good. Farndale, be it remembered, is in the National Park, and a Nature Reserve in its own right, with other treasures besides the daffodils. (Ed.)

HISTORY OF FARNDALE IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

The name Farndale first occurs in history in a charter⁽¹⁾ granted by Roger de Mowbray to the abbot and monks of Rievaulx Abbey. The date of the charter is c. 1154, and by it Roger bestowed upon the monastery -
..... "Midelhovet, that clearing in Farndale where the hermit Edmund used to dwell; and another clearing which is called Duvanesthuat, and common of pasture in the same valley, to wit, Farndale....."

It will be convenient to use this document as a point from which to pursue our researches, first of all backward in time for a century or so, and then forward to the middle of the 14th century. As well as conveying a certain amount of information, this charter of Roger de Mowbray's might also arouse certain questions in our minds. Who made the clearings and gave them their names, for example? How did Roger de Mowbray come to be in possession of Farndale? And who was Edmund the hermit?

Historians are now generally agreed that in the 10th century, a fairly large-scale movement of population began in the far west of our islands. Originating in Ireland and the Isle of Man, this movement crossed the narrow seas on to the mainland and via the Lake District and the Pennines flowed into Yorkshire. The people who formed it were of mixed Celtic and Scandinavian origin, the latter chiefly Norwegian, and the places where they settled bear names which testify to this duality of race. Thus 'Farndale' is compounded of a Celtic first syllable 'farn' = a fern, and a Norwegian second syllable 'dal' = a valley.⁽²⁾ Similarly, A.H. Smith derives 'Duvanesthuat' from an Old Irish personal name 'Dubhan' and the Norwegian 'thweit' = a clearing, thus giving 'Dubhan's clearing' as the meaning of the word. That Smith equates Duvanesthuat with the old Douthwaite Hall is open to question, as will be seen later. The river which runs through Farndale is the Dove, and this again is from a Celtic word 'dubo' meaning 'black' or 'shady'. It seems very possible then that Farndale was first settled by bands of mixed Celtic/Scandinavian people moving in from the west, and that it was they who first began the task of clearing certain areas of the dale of scrub and forest.

No mention is made of Farndale in the Domesday Survey but there is little doubt that at this time the dale was part of the vast northern territories which Hugh Fitzbaldric administered as tenant-in-chief of the Conqueror. This statement is based on the facts that the Survey mentions Kirkby Moorside, Gillamoor, Hutton-le-Hole, Welburn and other local places as belonging to Hugh, and that when his lands were parcelled out to a successor they clearly included Farndale, as will become apparent. It is not certainly known in what year Fitzbaldric died, nor is it known whether in fact he forfeited his lands before he died, an event of common occurrence in the early Middle Ages. In any event he had no sons to inherit his possessions, and at some point in the last decade of the 11th century his lands passed, presumably by royal grant, to Robert de Stuteville.⁽³⁾ The latter, nicknamed 'Grundeboef' or 'Fronteboef' is usually more kindly referred to as Robt. de Stuteville I to avoid confusion with his son (R. de S. II) and grandson (R. de S. III). The first

two Roberts left little mark of their ownership on Farndale, for in 1106 both of them were concerned in the revolt of Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy, against Henry I and both of them were captured "whereupon", says Dugdale ⁽⁴⁾ "all his (i. e. Robert I's) lands were given to Nigel d'Albini, progenitor to the noble family of Mowbray". Roger de Mowbray was the son of Nigel.

The third of our initial questions - "Who was Edmund the hermit?" - must remain unanswered. The mention of him in the Rievaulx Chartulary is the sole reference to this, the first recorded resident in Farndale. 'Midelhovet' or Middle Heads, a farm-house inhabited until the 1920's but now a ruin, is still a wild, lonely spot sheltering under a beetling crag at the head of the dale. A place more suitable for the popular conception of a hermit could hardly be imagined.

Since it was not the practice of the monks willingly to forfeit any grants of land which had been made to them, it is usual to find in any monastic chartulary recurring references, generally in confirmation charters, to their original gift. But this is not the case with Roger de Mowbray's grant of land in Farndale to Rievaulx. After this one reference, the Chartulary ignores it, and none of the many other documents consulted in connection with this essay make any reference to the presence of the monks in Farndale. We are left to wonder whether they did avail themselves of Roger's generosity, and whether the present Monkett House (661973) preserves a possibly older name - 'monk(e)gate' - meaning 'the monks' way'.

* * * * *

Powerful though he was, Roger de Mowbray was not to be left in undisputed possession of Farndale for long. Shortly after the charter referred to had been issued, Robert de Stuteville III, supported by his brother William, began a dispute with Roger concerning his right to those lands previously held by their grandfather⁽⁵⁾. This dispute dragged on for about ten years until, early in the reign of Henry II, a compromise was reached whereby de Mowbray granted Robert III land to the value of ten knights' fees. Part of this territory was the manor of Kirkby Moorside and its 'appurtenances' or 'members'. That Farndale was one of these appurtenances is evident from a charter ⁽⁶⁾ issued by Robt. de Stuteville III to St. Mary's Abbey, York, no later than 1183. By this charter Robert confirmed to the abbey the vill of Hutton-le-Hole and "privileges in Farndale for the abbey's men of Hutton and its hall at Spaunton".

From this point onwards, then, the position was that Farndale was part of the manor of Kirkby Moorside, held by the Mowbrays as tenants-in-chief of the king, and of the Mowbrays by the Stutevilles and their heirs as sub-tenants. For two hundred years, with the curious exception of a period of a few months when it was mortgaged to an Italian 'finance company' for 1200 marks⁽⁷⁾, the manor was a model of the system of sub-infeudation. Then in 1399 Thomas Mowbray was accused of treason and banished, and his estates were forfeited to the crown.

Robert de Stuteville III was a prominent and influential baron and a benefactor of several of the great northern abbeys. The available evidence (see next article in this issue) suggests that he was the founder of Keldholme Priory near Kirkby Moorside. When he died, in 1183, he was succeeded in his tenures by his eldest son William who, like his father, was a person of great eminence in northern affairs during the latter part of Henry II's reign and the beginning of John's. None of his extant charters refers, however, to Farndale. His son, Robert de Stuteville IV having died a minor, the inheritance of the manor of Kirkby Moorside passed to William's younger brother Nicholas (I) and after the latter's death to his son Nicholas (II). The period of the tenancy of the manor by these two Nicholases (c.1205 - 1233) is marked, so far as Farndale is concerned, by a protracted dispute with the abbot of St. Mary's, York, concerning rights of common of pasture in the dale.

Shortly after Domesday the abbot became lord of the manor of Spaunton, the western boundary of which commenced on the banks of the river Dove at the bridge just below the farm called Lowna (687910). From here, however, the boundary does not follow the line of the river northwards, but veers towards the north-east. Its direction is marked on the ordnance survey map by the Rural District Boundary line, and on the ground by a series of boundary stones whose names are well-known to those who walk the moors above Hutton-le-Hole. The area below Lowna as far as Keldholme is known as Douthwaite Dale, and there is ample evidence to show that most of this belonged to St. Mary's Abbey, though Robt. de Stuteville III had granted the prioress of Keldholme certain rights in the dale. It is for this reason that doubt is thrown on Smith's identification of Duvanesthuat with Douthwaite Hall. Rievaulx Abbey never seems to have had any interest in Douthwaite Dale, and a more probable location of Duvanesthuat is the present Duffinstone (646987) on the west side of High Farndale.

It seems fairly certain, therefore, that the phrase "between the waters of the Dove and the waters of the Seven" which constantly occurs in charters granted to the abbey, refers to the lower reaches of the river Dove and not to that part of it which flows specifically through Farndale. The situation is complicated by the fact that the area under discussion was also a royal forest, and that for the greater part of the Middle Ages the abbots of St. Mary's were the king's foresters there. The earliest reference to this royal forest of Farndale is in a precept of Henry I⁽⁸⁾, given to the sheriff Osbert in the first decade of the 12th century.

"I order that the abbot and monks of York may hold in peace and with honour all their woodland, and the land from the water of Dove to the water which is called Seven, as once they held it before the forest was made. I also grant to the abbot and his successors the whole of my forestry, and he shall cause to be preserved all my needful things, the hart and the hind, the wild boar and the hawk, in the same land."

This charter makes it quite clear that the forest had been made some time before, possibly in the reign of William Rufus. During the very early years of the 13th century it appears that Nicholas Stuteville I was granted the privilege of being the king's forester, for in 1209 we read ⁽⁹⁾ that the abbot of St. Mary's paid King John one hundred marks and a pal-frey

"for having the forest of Farndale which the king has taken from Nicholas de Stuteville".

With suspicious celerity Nicholas, almost immediately, asked that "twelve knights from Ryedale and Pickeringlythe" should make a perambulation between the king's forest and his, for a fee to the exchequer of 20 marks ⁽¹⁰⁾. This touchiness on the part of the two Nicholases concerning the exact boundary of Farndale, and their obvious mistrust of the abbots of St. Mary's (no doubt fully reciprocated by their reverences) seems quite remarkable when one considers the vast estates of which both parties were possessed.

During his reign, John's necessities drove him from time to time to disafforest certain of the tracts of land included in the old royal forests. Whether some suspicion had grown that this was the case in Farndale, or not, it is worth noting that Henry III felt it necessary in 1229 to issue a memorandum ⁽¹¹⁾ that -

"the whole of the forest of Galtres and the forest between Ouse and Derwent, and the forest of Farndale are ancient forests"

and in 1255, in granting to Hugh Bigod and his heirs the office of forester - the king euphemistically calls it 'a gift' though Hugh actually paid 500 marks for it - the boundaries of the forest are stated as follows ⁽¹²⁾:-

"from the waters of the Dove to the water called Seven in breadth, and length from the bounds of Cleveland to the road running from Pickering to Helmsley by the lawn of Catwayt". (Catter Bridge?)

This statement would seem to leave no doubt that the east side of Farndale was part of the royal forest, and with the abbot of St. Mary's being the king's forester as well as the lord of the manor of the contiguous territory of Spaunton, there is perhaps little wonder that the Stutevilles accused the abbot of encroaching on their territory. Strangely enough, after a final concord was made between Nicholas de Stuteville II and the abbot Robert in 1233 ⁽¹³⁾ there is no subsequent mention of any friction between the heirs of the former or the successors of the latter.

As for the forest itself, it does not appear to have provided the medieval kings with much hunting. There is some possibility that Edward II visited it on one occasion, but no other monarch seems to have ventured there. The opinion of John Cromwell, keeper of the King's Forests north of Trent, set down in an inquisition ⁽¹⁴⁾ ordered by Edward III, is that -

"the forest of Spaunton between the Dove and Seven is so confined that deer do not oft repair thither, except at odd times some harts and hinds; and when they enter

the forest and are seen and found there
they quickly and quietly retire into other
parts of the country outside the forest".

This offers a very good reason why a king should not travel north to hunt in these parts; but if Cromwell's report can be taken as describing the condition of the forest as it had always been, it makes one wonder why it was ever declared a royal forest in the first place.

* * * * *

When Nicholas de Stuteville II died in 1233, he left no male heir but a daughter, Joan, who was twice married, first to Hugh Wake and secondly to Hugh Bigod. On her death in 1276 (she outlived both her husbands) an inquest was taken into the extent of her estates. It is in this document ⁽¹⁵⁾ that we first learn anything concrete about the inhabitants of Farndale. They are -

"tenants in bondage, holding by acres
who pay £27 - 5s., that is at 12d. an
acre. Seven cottars in Farndale (pay)
15s. 8d."

A simple calculation based on these figures gives us a total of 545 acres farmed by the 'tenants in bondage', presumably villeins, and about 16 acres farmed by the seven 'cottars'. If this acreage is compared with that computed by the surveyor of Farndale ⁽¹⁶⁾ in 1781-2, namely 4711 acres, it will be seen that, however inaccurate the first figure may be (and we have no reason to suspect its accuracy), the land under cultivation in the dale must have been quite a small part of its total area. No indication is given in this inquisition of the number of tenants in Farndale, but the omission is remedied only a few years later, in 1282, when an inquisition post mortem ⁽¹⁷⁾ was held into the extent of the estate of Baldwin Wake, Lady Joan's son by her first husband, and heir to the manor of Kirkby Moorside amongst others. From this interesting document we learn that -

"in a certain dale called Farndale there
are fourscore and ten natives . . . whose
rents are extended at £38 - 8 - 8d."

We cannot now know, of course, whether the extent of each "native's" (i. e. villein's) holding was the same, and thus whether each paid the same rent. But assuming for the moment that this was so, we can calculate from the figures given that the rent paid by each villein was 8s. 6½d., and if the rent per acre was the same as in 1276, this would mean that each tenant farmed approximately 8½ acres apiece. By simple arithmetic again it can be deduced that in 1276 there were 66 tenant farmers in the dale. Apparently then, in the six years between 1276 and 1282 there had been an increase of twenty-four in the number of Farndale farmers. It is interesting to note how the 12d. per acre paid in 1276 compares with the rent per acre in 1782 ⁽¹⁸⁾. By this later date, of course, the rent varied according to the quality of the land, but the average rent per acre of the Middle Head Farm was 4s., as was that of Duffinstone, whilst Wake Lady Green brought in 6s. per acre. These three farms are chosen as illustrations because from documentary evidence

they appear to be amongst the oldest established; but the general average rent per acre of all the farms was much the same. What the comparative values of 1/- in Edward I's reign and in the reign of George III were it is impossible to say, but clearly the value of the land in Farnedale had not changed much in five hundred years.

In addition to paying their rents, these medieval farmers of Farndale also had to pay at Martinmas two strikes of nuts each, with the exception of four tenants who only paid one strike each. What the term 'nuts' included it is hard to determine exactly, but it seems to have meant acorns as much as any other kind. Eighty-five of the farmers were obliged to give a harrowing in Lent - "according to the size of his holding, that is, for each acre of his own land a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. worth of harrowing". Further obligations which fell upon them are listed at the end of the inquiry:-

"And be it known (they) ought to be talliated every year at Michaelmas, and shall give merchet for their daughters, and gersume, and do suit to the lord's mill, and shall give the tenth pig, although the lord shall not find them pannage."

Such were some of the conditions of life under which the farmers laboured in 13th century Farndale.

It would be wrong, however, to infer that all these tenants lived a life of near or abject poverty. In 1301 Edward I levied a tax of one fifteenth of the value of every person's goods, to pay for his war against the Scots. Collectors were appointed for various parts of the country, and the returns for the North Riding still exist in their entirety in the Public Record Office (19). In Farndale, thirty-four men and one woman (a widow) contributed a total of £3 - 7 - $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. This may be compared with the £2 3 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. paid by 27 inhabitants of Kirkby Moorside (excluding the lord of the manor, John Wake, who himself paid over two pounds), and the sum of £3 8 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. paid by 36 villagers of Helmsley.

That Edward intended the tax to touch even the very poor is shown by the fact that some of the amounts paid by individuals in the Riding were as low as 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d., meaning that their entire goods were valued at less than half-a-crown. The lowest amount paid by a Farndale farmer was 3d., and the highest 7s. 9d. (by Simon the Miller). Several others paid between three and five shillings, indicating that their total worldly possessions varied in value between 45s. and 75s. These figures assume greater significance if set against the value of certain goods at the same period. A short list (20) of some of the common articles and animals includes:-

a cow	5s.	a bullock	2s.
a cart horse	5s.	a sheep	12 pence
one pound of wool	3s.	one quarter of wheat	3s.
one quarter of barley	3s.	"two little pigs"	12d. each
a bed	4s.	a robe	10s.
"a poor robe"	4s.	a brass pot	20d.
a clasp of silver		18d.	

A villein who paid four shillings tax might, therefore, have possessed all these things at the time of the levy and some other items besides. On the other hand a man such as William de Monkegate (surely the same place as the present day Monket House?), who paid only $3\frac{1}{4}$ d. could have had few material possessions. Certainly the fact emerges from even a cursory glance at the Collectors' Returns for Farndale, that there was quite a range in wealth amongst the inhabitants of the dale.

This same document is interesting for the names of the tenants it contains and the likeness of some of these names to those of farms still occupied in the dale. We have already mentioned William de Monkegate in this connection. William Wakelevedy might well, one supposes, have lived at the cottage now known as Wake Lady Green, and Walter de Ellerscaye bore a name suspiciously like that of the present Ellers House. William de Almeheved (Holm Head in 1782, Elm House to-day) is another suggestive name, whilst Ralph and William de Westgille, John de Brannordale, Godfrey de Hoton and William de Fademore quite clearly proclaim their place of origin.

That there were other tenants in Farndale who for some reason or other escaped paying Edward's levy - (they can hardly have been poorer, surely, than the persons who paid only threepence!) - is shown by the appearance of their names in the lists of those found guilty of forest trespass in the royal forest of Pickering ⁽²¹⁾. In July 1323, Adam son of Simon the Miller was fined 25s. 8d. for taking two hinds. In September 1332, Robert son of Simon of Farndale (whether the unfortunate miller or not is not stated), in company with four others "hunted a hart and carried it off". Robert's four companions were fined, he himself being outlawed. On another occasion four Farndale men - Roger del Mulne, Robert son of Peter, Walter Blakhous and Ralph de Heved - suffered outlawry because "on a Monday in January (they) killed a soar and slew a hart with bows and arrows". Ralph de Heved is in all probability the same person as the Ralph de Capite of the 1301 Lay Subsidy levy. Amongst those people who had been arrested for poaching but had been let out on bail to appear at the next assizes "but neither appeared nor excused themselves as the custom is" were Richard son of John the Miller of Farndale and Adam son of Simon the Miller of Farndale, John son of Richard of Westgill and his brother Robert. In 1336 John, the son of the Farndale blacksmith (Willelmus Fabri) was outlawed for his part in taking a hind and a calf in the forest.

The imperfect nature of medieval justice is illustrated by the fact that Lady Blanche Wake, whose tenants all these men were, was also convicted in 1332 of taking a soar and two hinds and carrying them off for her own use ⁽²²⁾. "Afterward" continues the document, "the Earl (i. e. the Earl of Lancaster) directed his Justices to stay all further proceedings against the Lady Blanche, wherefore they stayed proceedings".

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KELDHOLME PRIORY: THE EARLY YEARS

by

J. H. Rushton

The Cistercian nunnery known as Keldholme Priory stood for four hundred years in the low-lying enclosure between the River Dove and the old road from Kirkby Moorside to Pickering. To-day a more modern building carries the Priory name while a few stone fragments, two burial slabs and some vague earthworks are all that remain above ground of its predecessor. In such written records as can yet be discovered, the nunnery left but a pale trace of its rich daily life. Even the nuns themselves were ill-informed about their early history.

The Prioress in 1278-81 claimed that Henry the King, son of the Conqueror, had issued the charter which she then produced, and it was to be suggested that a Prioress Sybil early in the 12th century, during King Henry the 1st's reign, had drawn up another charter, which was witnessed by Stephen de Meinill. Burton, Eastmead and many other local historians repeated this tradition that Keldholme Priory was founded during the reign of the first King Henry and that consequently the founder was the first Robert de Stuteville.

Sir Charles Clay has discounted this story, pointing out that it lacks corroboration in any other document. King John in his confirmation charter to the Priory mentions a (lost) charter of his father, King Henry the 2nd, but makes no reference to Henry the 1st. This confirmation gives the 3rd Robert de Stuteville as the principal donor to the house, with the consent of his (eldest) son William, but without mention of his grandfather. The clauses of Robert's charter are expressed in the same terms as that from which the 13th century Prioress was quoting. Furthermore, there were at least three Stephen de Meinills and while the first did live early in the 12th century, one of his successors is known to have witnessed a charter issued by a Prioress Sybil in the period 1224-69. Clay argued that the Prioress was probably quoting from King Henry the 2nd's confirmation of Robert de Stuteville the 3rd's charter.

It is quite conceivable that the Prioress should have made such a mistake. The terms of the charter may have been vague, while the level of literacy in convents was not always remarkably high. Deliberate error cannot be excluded, for the antiquity of a claim was considered to exalt its validity and monastic forgeries were common enough. Clay's argument is supported by the absence of any independent reference to the nuns before 1166, even in sources where they might be expected, if the house was then in existence. Thereafter, such references become reasonably common, and include a sequence of gifts typical of the early years in the life of similar establishments.

Even more convincing is the overall unlikelihood of Keldholme having been the first house of the Cistercian order in England. King Henry the 1st reigned from 1100 to 1135. Robert de Stuteville 1 was in Normandy in 1089, and only acquired the Kirkby Moorside estates from which Keldholme was granted, after the death of their first Norman tenant Hugh

Fitzbaldric, about 1089-90. He lost them again after his capture at Tinchebrai in 1106, where he was a senior military commander on the side of Duke Robert. He was imprisoned for life and by c1109-14 his estate was in the hands of the Crown. Between 1089 and 1114, when Stuteville might have founded Keldholme Priory, the Cistercian mission to England had not begun, and there is no evidence of their presence in Yorkshire before 1131-2, when Rievaulx was founded near Helmsley.

The events of this early period were not without influence on the as yet unborn nunnery. The transfer of the pre-Conquest estate, which embraced the manor of Kirkby Moorside and its two clusters of outlying berewicks, to the Norman Sheriff - Hugh Fitzbaldric - probably ensured the early recovery of their agriculture from any destruction caused during the Norman suppression of the northern rebellions. In 1086 many of the villein farms were already at work with their ploughs, and within 50 years new intakes were being cultivated beyond the old bounds of the open fields. Already Fitzbaldric had given 15 of the 56½ carucates, at which the cultivated land of the estate was assessed, to the Benedictine Abbey of St. Mary's, York, at Hutton, Normanby and Misperton. Robert de Stuteville 1 subsequently gave them Kirkby Misperton church with an oxgang of land, and tithes of his demesne. The Abbot's Hall at Spaunton became the centre for administering the development of much of the area between the rivers Dove and Seven.

King Henry the 1st regranted the remaining Kirkby estates to Nigel d'Aubigny. After his death, and that of his wife Gunreda, they passed to his son Roger de Mowbray. Meanwhile, the Cistercian Order had made its powerful impact on northern minds and this family actively sponsored the extension of Rievaulx Abbey influence into middle Ryedale. The Kirkby Moorside outland to the west was substantially reduced as the Abbey sought properties at a greater distance from the mother-house to support its growing numbers of monks and lay-brothers. Between 1144 and 1157, Gundreda gave Skiplam, whilst Roger gave most of Welburn and Wombledon. His steward Ralph de Belvoir gave much of Hoveton, and subsequently his clerk Sampson de Cornwall, Peter de Hoveton, Lambert de Hoveton's wife and the Hospital of Whitby gave or sold to Rievaulx the entire 2 carucates of this "lost" village, which abutted Kirkby on the west, and was centred around the modern Howkeld Mill site. Kirkby Moorside Church with a carucate in Kirkby's fields, and Kirkdale Church in Welburn were given to the Augustinian Priory of Newburgh after being refused by the Cistercian House at Byland.

The prior establishment of the Benedictine estate east of Kirkby, and of the Rievaulx granges west of Kirkby left relatively little of the Mowbray estate available for further endowments. Much of what remained had been let to tenants holding by knight service. By 1147, the young brothers William and Robert de Stuteville III were seeking the return of their grandfather's estates, and protesting against new grants to monasteries. After the accession of King Henry the 2nd (1154-65) they were able to gain a provisional settlement, by which Mowbray granted ten knight's fees to Robert including the Kirkby

estate, and after which Robert issued a series of confirmations to Byland, Rievaulx, and St. Mary's securing them in the gifts they had received from his patrimony.

Stuteville had earlier been restored at Cottingham in the East Riding, and with Buttercrambe this remained an important castle centre of the family's influence. Yet it seems likely that his recovery of Kirkby also elevated the fortunes of that township and brought many local changes. It is possible that the Stuteville castle was developed at this time, or shortly afterwards. By 1154-6 his park at Kirkby had been carved from the land north of Keldholme. He was at Pickering with the King during 1163, a year of active castle construction at Pickering and Scarborough, and five years later he supervised the work of castle construction at Bamburgh. Subsequently he was Sheriff of Yorkshire for five years and had custody of numerous royal castles.

Robert de Stuteville III issued his first known charter to the so-called "nuns of Dove" between 1154 and 1166. This confirmed to them the place called "Keldholme" and other adjoining land with privileges within the reduced Kirkby demesne. Not the least of the factors influencing this choice of a site was the effect of the earlier grants to other monastic houses in reducing the sites available. The foundation grant was clearly intended to make whatever foothold the nuns had established into a permanent and rounded endowment. It included enclosures, arable land, meadow, pastures, and access to woodland, so creating a new embryo township.

The "holme" was enclosed by the nuns, and here they set up their Priory buildings and a home farm. The river bank site took its name either from the springs within the enclosure or more likely from the keld or spring to the north where the river Dove re-emerges from the rock to form the fast-moving and remarkable torrent, which had already been used before the Norman Conquest to activate the Kirkby Moorside mill a few hundred yards away. The enclosure was not isolated, or even remote, but it stood within sight of Kirkby Castle and was perhaps reasonably secure. It was adjacent to lands, meadows and commons from which a useful endowment for a Prioress and thirteen nuns could be carved.

The land to the north between Keldholme and Kirkby Park had already been brought under the plough, though probably as a demesne culture rather than as part of the Kirkby open field oxgangs. Part of this was given to the Priory within bounds that may be identical with the known 18th century boundary of Keldholme township, but which are described as limited by the path which ran to Haverbergam water mill as far as the wood which fell in Ramesdale, Wymbelthwayt and Arkelcroft. Clearly Ramesdale wood then extended further south to the field edge over what later became the Back of Parks Common, and although the clearings of Wymbelthwayt and Arkelcroft can only be guessed at, the tract would seem to lie between Swineherd Lane leading to the woods and to what is now called Yoadwath Mill, and the uncultivated land fringing the river Dove.

Besides this essential gift of arable land, Robert gave them an enclosure for growing herbs which cannot be identified, and Kirkby Mill with the millrace arising from it. He gave pasture rights in Yauenwyth wood, and grazing for sheep, cattle and pigs with a vaccary and an enclosed piece of cultivated land in Bransdale. In both Yauenwyth and Farndale he allowed them timber for fuel, fencing, hedging and building under the supervision of his foresters, and throughout his forest, he allowed them bark from the trees, which the nuns were later to use in their Keldholme tannery.

Two more blocks of land made up the foundation grant. The first was the whole land of Rook Barugh, a small community three miles south of Keldholme, two parts of whose meadow had already been given to Rievaulx Abbey. The second block abutted the river Dove near Keldholme on the south including the cultivated land bounded by an old ditch, and meadow as far as the bounds of Edstone. It may just be relevant to this gift that in return for his confirmation charter to St. Mary's, Robert had secured an assurance that he could do what he wished with the arable land on the river Dove below the mill of Gillamoor, which he had previously put to the use of his serjeant.

The knightly class of minor manor lords followed the greater figures in making donations to monastic houses. Several subtenants of the Stutevilles gave properties to Keldholme Priory before the close of the century. In 1166, Robert de Stuteville had purchased two carucates at Ingleby (Greenhow), abutting the northern moors of Kirkby, paying 14 marks for the property and so becoming chief lord of the Ingleby family. By degrees, the whole of the estate came to be held by the nuns. Ralph Paen and his wife Columba de Ingleby gave 25 acres of arable in their demesne tillages, and pasture rights. Their sons William and Alexander made a series of gifts which by 1199 included the 2 carucates and 63 acres of other arable land, with permission to break up the moorland as far as their arable and pasture extended. It became the Priory's largest holding outside Keldholme, but directly linked with it by the old Rudland routeway across the moors, and within easy reach of the Priory's moorhouse.

Other more distant gifts came from the tenants of other Stuteville lands. Robert's daughter Burga allowed her husband William de Vescy to give a mark of silver to be paid to them yearly out of her dower mill at Thornton. Thurstan de Borrowby gave six oxgangs in the parish of Leake, and closer to home Hugh del Tuit gave the Edstone mill, the culture called Coleslund and two acres in Seliflat, which probably formed the basis of the Priory farm at Little Edstone.

William de Stuteville succeeded his father Robert when he died c. 1183. His additions to the Priory estate included all the land of "Evenewit", probably to be identified with the Cold Harbour Close just to the north of the modern Ravenswick farm. It was probably during his lordship that the nuns acquired the large tract on the east of Keldholme confirmed to them at Scarborough by King John in February 1200-1. Its boundaries are clear to-day, and then stretched from a limekiln near

the Dove by the nun's ditch as far as the lands of St. Mary's Abbey eastwards, and then by the well-established bounds between Kirkby Moorside and Sinnington, the "lost" village of Cathwaite, and Edstone, as far as the river Dove.

William was able, early in 1201, to negotiate a new agreement, made in the presence of the King, settling the old dispute over his inheritance with the Mowbray family. He gained new knight's fees, and the service of fees which he had earlier held as a mesne tenant, giving up in return his claim to the Mowbray barony, and paying a heavy fine to the King, which left him greatly in debt. Shortly before his death, the two daughters of one of his new tenants, Emma and Sibyll de Fadmoor were associated with their husbands in a gift of four oxgangs at Nunnington and two at Fadmoor to Keldholme Priory. This gift did not prove entirely secure. An assize at Newcastle questioned whether Odo, father of Nisant de Fadmoor held the two Fadmoor oxgangs in demesne, which Prioress Basilia was holding, and at a settlement four years later, she recognised his claim, and her holding there was reduced to a single oxgang.

The more distant properties were probably never farmed directly by the nuns or their conversi, or lay-workers, but they did bring important rent-incomes. Norman de Redman, whose lord had married a granddaughter of the founder, gave a plot called Tranterne at Thirneby in Westmoreland. In 1317, the tenant there was said to have paid annually a dry-rent of 40s. to the Priory, "time out of mind". By mid-13th century the Ingleby Greenhow estate of 2 carucates and 63 acres had been let off for 6 marks yearly by Prioress Sybil to Thomas de Castre. There were other interests at York and in the West Riding. Matilda of Heward claimed widow's dower in tenements at York in 1219 from Walter Blome or the Prioress of Keldholm, and in 1232-46 Robert the Blunt made claims affecting a York house paying one mark rent, against the Prioresses of Keldholme and Molesby. Adam Fitzpeter confirmed a convention between the nuns and the monks of Kirkstall about a carucate at Horsford and two carucates and a mill in Kirkeley.

Perhaps the most important properties that the nunnery acquired were the estates at Cropton and the Habtons, each easily accessible by direct routeways from Keldholme. They were complementary to each other, the one low-lying and with good summer pastures, the other edging the wide moorland sheepgrounds. Great and Little Habton were some six miles from the Convent, reached by the road that ran from the Dove-bridge over a wide belt of common land to join the old Roman way to Newsham bridge, where the two townships occupied a bend in the river Rye, and a small plot called the Holm on the other side of the bridge. Probably their earliest possession here was the carucate given by Eda, daughter of Ansketil de Habton (c1163-85). Together with two oxgangs given by Ingald of Little Habton, this probably made up the ten oxgangs, tofts and crofts which William, son of William, son of Nicholas de Habton gave them, but his grant also included arable land in Benedyflat, common pasture at Milne Green, land at Goldilandes and Hornesey, pasture in Little Habton for their beasts of all kinds throughout the Manor, and both turf rights, and pasture for 200 sheep in Great Habton Moor.

The Cropton estate given by Ernald de Benefeld originally amounted to four oxgangs, and two tofts, one described as abutting a spring on the south, the other near the river of Hamcliff on the north. Both were overlooked by the Stuteville castle of Cropton, and the small valley estate was later expanded to include five oxgangs, a toft and pasture rights for 300 sheep in the extensive Cropton commons fringing the Seven and stretching over the moors to Hartoft. The other toft was to be described in 1260 as "a piece of inclosed land called the Bekhus". A more modern Beck House now marks its site adjacent to the ford and bridge over the Seven which led to Rosedale and Cleveland.

The confirmation of pasture rights for specific numbers of sheep suggests that by the early 13th century, the Priory like its patrons, the Stuteville family, was becoming more heavily involved in sheep farming. The issues of William de Stuteville's estate for the half-year ending Michaelmas 1203, included £456 from the sale of stock throughout Yorkshire, which included 3500 sheep and lambs sold at prices between 1s. and 1/8d. Nicholas de Stuteville, who succeeded to the estate was heavily in debt to the Jews, and had every incentive to develop the new sheep pastures he had acquired at Cropton and Middleton. He queried the right of the Abbot of St. Mary's to take pasture beyond the river Dove in Farndale, though without success, and it was during the tenure of Nicholas or his immediate successors that a number of sheepfolds were established on the moors above Gillamoor and Fadmoor. It seems likely that the early years of this century also saw Keldholme Priory establish granges at Beck House, Cropton, and at Habton, where a field next to the modern grange and their land of Hornsey still bears the title "Nun Flat". At Keldholme, the flocks were probably managed from the home farm, but the Priory's close and houses at "Morhouse" above Kirkby Moorside, mentioned in 1371, as having goods in it to the value of 40s., may also have served as a grange, or pastoral farm from which sheep flocks on the moors could be supervised.

During the 13th century much of the wool-clip was sold to travelling agents. The Pratica della Mercatura of Francesco Pergolotti records a list of the English monasteries which sold wool, compiled for the use of Italian merchants and mentions some eighteen Lincolnshire and Yorkshire nunneries, with the annual quantity that was likely to be available at each house. Keldholme could supply "from 12 sacks", while the more recent Stuteville foundation at Rosedale would have ten sacks, and Wykeham Priory, only four, perhaps so low because of its close connections with local wool-buyers. Only Stixwold at 15 sacks exceeded the Keldholme supply. If a sack averaged 240 fleeces, then the Priory of Keldholme may have had around 3000 sheep in 1275 A.D.

Little is known of the Priory's management of their arable lands. These included some 53 oxgangs in 8 townships, as well as acreages in flats at Edston, Habton, Ingleby and Tranethern, and all the land of Rook Barugh, Keldholme and Evenewit. They held perhaps half as many tofts as they had oxgangs, and associated with these holdings were meadow acreages, common rights, and rights to pasture in the

open fields after the crops had been lifted. Only at Rook Barugh and Little Habton and Keldholme does the Priory seem to have enjoyed full manorial rights, and here they may have enjoyed the right to ploughing, reaping and harrowing services from their tenants, but in the early years conversi were employed at Keldholme, and perhaps elsewhere to work the demesne-land. Not all of the gifts and purchases of the house are known, and by 1284-5, the Prioress and Nuns had six oxgangs at Little Barugh, and five oxgangs at Edstone, of unknown provenance.

Nicholas de Stuteville made one of the last known endowments of the house, when he gave an annuity of four marks out of Gillamoor Mill, pending the time when he or his heirs should bestow a rent of 100s. in some ecclesiastical benefice in Yorkshire (1205-18). The arrangement does not seem to have been permanent and may have disappeared when the Priory's rights over Kirkby Mill were commuted for a fixed sum of 26/8d. at an unknown date before the 14th century. The Vicar's tithe-right in the mill was commuted at the same time for 13/4d. and the two outpayments long continued to be made from the estate incomes. This manor lord's financial difficulties led him to lease and sell many other estates, and these commutations may well have formed part of his policy of restraint.

When the second Nicholas de Stuteville died, the Kirkby estate passed to Joan, wife of Hugh Wake and later wife of Hugh Bigod. Besides establishing Kirkby Moorside market and fair, on the Priory's feast-day, Hugh seems to have prevailed on the Priory to part with its Cropton estate, possibly in exchange for the equivalent holding which they held at Edstone of the Bigod fee. In 1260, he exchanged it, and other property at Aislaby and Cropton, for land in Levisham previously held by the Church of St. Mary, Malton. It is also possible though not established that the Priory lost their estate at Little Habton in the same period. The Archbishop forbade further alienations of Priory land in 1309.

The need to adopt such financial expedients as favourable leases, and the granting of corrodies, was increased with the changes that came towards the end of the century, and later accentuated by the local pestilences of Edward the IIIrd's reign, which reduced the value of arable land at Kirkby Moorside by almost two thirds. In 1309 and 1314, the Archbishop had to forbid corrodies and insist on the proper keeping of the accounts. He had to order that necessary repairs must be carried out, particularly to the roofs, and to forbid the sale by individual nuns of books and ornaments from the Church. Several decades of real difficulty followed.

It seems likely that the Priory buildings had received their final form by this time. A church dedicated to the Blessed Mary had been built by 1208, and the chapter-house, cloister and other religious buildings were grouped below it, within the Keldholme inclosure. Beyond the road and the river which formed the precinct boundary, the rigs and furrows of old ploughland still run right up to the inclosure on all sides

except the north-east where the road probably widened into a small green, which has since been built upon, but there may have been one or two house closes on the opposite side of the road, including one used by the chaplain, in the 16th century.

We can do no more than speculate about the precise arrangement of the buildings within the Keldholme inclosure. Descriptions have survived for several other Yorkshire nunneries made in the 16th century, but none has yet come to light for Keldholme. Analogy may tell us something, though, for Wykeham, Yedingham, Basedale, Esholt, Swine, Kirklees and other nunneries appear to conform to a uniform pattern. The Rev. W. Eastmead in 1824 reported that the Priory stood principally on the ground which in his day was the approach to Caleb Fletcher's house, entered not far from Keldholme Bridge. Caleb's house is the modern "Keldholme Priory", and the area cleared is partly covered by the "factory" that he built, and a modern tennis court and gardens. The workmen who levelled the ground found several stone coffins, tessellated pavement and fragments of pillars.

It would seem likely that St. Mary's church stood on an east-west alignment to the north of the cloister and the square of buildings around it, which occupied the area cleared, and whose stones have been liberally used for new constructions. The stone church was probably between 60 and 80 ft. long and some 16 to 20 ft. broad, overlapping a cloister between 48 and 60 ft. square. Its roof would be lead-covered and through several glazed windows, one might have seen a high altar, one or two altars in the choir, and perhaps two more in the church.

The narrow corridors of the cloister, partly covered with lead or slate may have included a burial yard within them and gave access externally to a series of single and double storey buildings, including the dorter over a chapter house on the east side, a frater and possibly a guest chamber on the south, and a Hall with its buttery and kitchen to the west. Various smaller chambers would be built at the end of these long houses, and the Hall would include a Prioress's chamber. The outer yard would include a wider range of domestic buildings, large and small, including cowhouse, swinehouse and stables, an ox-house, hayhouse, malting and brewing houses, barns and possibly some chambers over the gate. The house where the early priests stayed was probably in the inner precinct.

Here the nuns lived out their life, according, and sometimes not according to the Cistercian rule. Above the Church, in which were the relics of the Holy Cross, and the finger of St. Stephen, the two bells tolled the hours which set the pattern of the daily religious life. A long line of chaplains followed the Master Geoffrey, who was here in 1166, to hear confessions, and Archbishops and Archdeacons as well as ladies of the Stuteville family occupied the guestrooms. Young girl boarders and widows were received to fill gaps in the Priory funds. Novices trembled as they entered the precinct to begin their trial year, some bringing with them an oxgang or an acre or two

which served the same purpose. Here, despite difficulties, the house fulfilled its function, sending up a 400 year petition of prayer on behalf of the world outside, which by endowment had made its secluded religious life possible.

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CRUCK HOUSES IN NORTH-EAST YORKSHIRE

by

Theodore Nicholson, T.D., F.S.A.

"A few "cruck" or "crook" framed houses still exist in and around Helmsley, and some may be of great age. This style of building dates from Saxon times, although it became traditional and was carried on right through the Middle Ages with many and varied modifications in different district. Therefore it is often difficult to date a building of this type, and research carried out in one area may not be valid for another.

Basically a cruck frame consists of two or more pairs of timbers set up in the form of inverted "V's", the lower ends resting on the ground and the apex supporting the ridge of the roof. The crucks are usually of oak, measuring 12 in. by 8 in. in section or more. As they govern the width as well as the height of the building, they were often cut from curved trees to give increased space.

Each pair of crucks carried two cross-members, each of which projected beyond the crucks themselves on either side. The lower cross-member, the tie-beam, was the full width of the building, and carried on its extremities the wall-plates or eaves. About half-way between the tie-beam and the apex was the collar-beam, the second and slightly shorter cross-member, carrying on its extremities the purlins. At the apex the crucks themselves fitted into a piece of wood known as the saddle, on which rested the rigg-tree, another heavy oaken beam which ran the full length of the roof and formed the ridge.

Normally these houses would have had thatched roofs and wooden or wattle-and-daub walls, though pantile roofs and stone walls were usually added later. In an area where stone is plentiful the stonework may well be original in some instances."

Cruck houses in Helmsley and district are briefly described as above in this Group's History of Helmsley, (Appendix I) and the note is illustrated by sectional drawings of a typical example in Bilsdale (Carr Cote).

The Cruck house is, however, by no means peculiar to Yorkshire; it represents, indeed, one of the earliest patterns of cottage construction in the country, and it is likely that examples exist (or existed) in every county where suitable timber was available.

I am indebted to Mr. Raymond Hayes for some notes which suggest that cruck-building may have been introduced to Britain by way of Yorkshire; an article in Antiquity, Vol. 110, traces the method back to the Schleswig district of South Denmark, whence early in the 6th century tribes crossed to the Yorkshire coast "occupying the slopes around the edges

of the Cleveland Hills, the North and South Wolds and the Vale of York, where they built their cruck-trussed dwellings". Cruck construction continued in these areas until well into the 18th century.

It is therefore extremely difficult to date a cruck-house, almost the only clue being the design of the windows, which however have in many cases been "modernised" in the 18th or early 19th century.⁽¹⁾

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Dimetian Code of Welsh laws laid down that "fees were to be paid if timber be cut in a person's wood without his permission other than the three timbers which are free for a builder on field land;" - again - "three timbers which each builder on field land should have from the owner of the wood, whether the wood-man will it or not - a ridge-piece and two roof forks".⁽²⁾ The above provided a house of two bays, gable-walls being of stone as in this district.

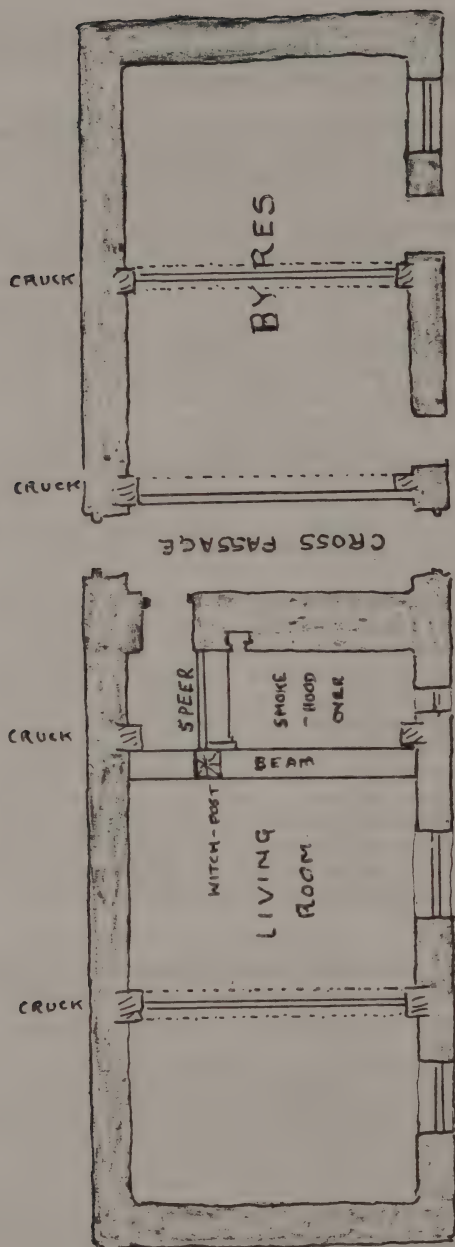
Gordon Home in his Evolution of an English Town, quotes from some records of Henry VIII: "In 1498 the Abbot of Whitby had as many oakes taken in Godlande" (Goathland)" as made after the manner of the Countrey iij pair of forkes with other bernes and wall plaites as were mete for the repairalling of an hows of his in Godlande.....".

In Cumberland the cruck houses were called "clay-daubins" and many of these are still to be seen in the Solway plain, north-west of Carlisle. When these were intended to house a newly-married couple the whole village turned out at first light with the intention of completing the house from start to finish in a single day, finishing up after dark with a "hansel dance" in the new house. A low plinth of stone had been put in position and no doubt the crucks would be lying ready when they started, and were soon erected. The walls were built of rectangular cakes of clay mixed with straw and were quickly laid in position on the stone plinths, while the joiners set up the crucks and purlins; each had his task. Finally the house was thatched, but the long day was not over, for the house had still to be "hanselled".⁽³⁾ This took the form of a dance in which all took part on the barely dry clay floor of the house.⁽⁴⁾

In the south-west Midlands where wood-framed houses were common, the gable walls as well as interior partitions were of cruck construction, and the cruck timbers are exposed at both ends of the house.

The method of construction was as follows: The main timbers or blades with their cross members and saddle pieces were assembled on the ground, as many sets as were required for the internal divisions of the house (and for the gables if the house was to be wood-framed).

The pairs of crucks were first set in position, the butt ends being sunk a foot or so into the ground; the rigg-tree was then laid along the apex of the crucks and made fast, and the wall-plates and purlins were fitted.



TYPICAL
YEOMAN'S LONGHOUSE
NORTH RIDING OF YORKSHIRE

Finally the chimney-breast wall, the stone gables (where used) and the front and back walls were erected to the required height, the frames filled in where necessary with wattle and daub, and the roof thatched.

The lower portion of the crucks, up to eaves height was imbedded in the thickness of the wall, and the foot of the cruck may often be seen projecting externally at ground level.

The earliest cruck-houses in the North Riding conform to the pattern of the mediaeval yeoman's long-house. This was a long low thatched building one room thick, at one end of which was the family dwelling, at the other the byres. Between the two portions was a fairly wide passage with a door at either end; one of these was the main entrance to the house, and the passage was known as the threshold.

When some grain was required, sheaves were laid in the passage, preferably on a windy day, and both doors were opened. The sheaves were then threshed with a flail and the chaff was carried away by the wind.

The cross passage divided the building into two more or less equal parts, and was flanked on the domestic side by a substantial stone wall which carried the chimney-stack and formed the back wall of the "fire-house", hearth-place or inglenook; on its other side was a wooden or wattle and daub partition, affixed to the pair of crucks which divided the living quarters from the byres.

At the far end of the cross passage a door opened right or left as the case might be into the living room, alongside the inglenook, but divided from it by a short wooden partition known as the "speer".

The living room was, it will be seen, divided into two parts - the room proper and the inglenook.

The division was marked by another pair of crucks placed 4, 5 or 6 ft. from the back wall of the inglenook, and this carried a heavy oak beam - "the chimney beam" spanning the room from side to side about a foot below the rafters.

The room was ceiled by rafters some 7ft. from the ground, with heavy oak cross-beams where necessary, but the inglenook was open above to a canopy or smoke-hood which tapered upwards to its apex at the chimney-stack; the inner edge of this rested upon the chimney-beam.

The smoke-hood was usually of wattle and daub, but in one case within my knowledge was of small flat stones sealed with plaster on the outer surface.⁽⁵⁾

It is now rare, however, to find the inglenook open to the smoke-hood; almost invariably these have been ceiled over at the same height as the room during the 18th or early 19th century, and a conventional fireplace and flue inserted, the latter being contrived in the thickness of the chimney-stack wall.

In some cases the smoke-hood survives, projecting boldly into the bedroom above, but more often it has been removed, and the only sign of its existence is the change in the floor boards, where it was - wide oak to narrow deal.

The speer extended from the back wall of the inglenook to the chimney beam, where it terminated in a vertical post let into the under-side of the chimney-beam, known as the witch-post, of which more below.

At the opposite end of the recess was usually a small window to light the hearth, and a bench, sometimes with a wing and arm-rest such as are found on high-backed settles was affixed to the inner side of the speer.

A chain with a hook at the bottom hung from a cross bar called the rannel-balk up in the smoke-hood, enabling pots and kettles to be suspended over the fire; originally this would be laid on the earth floor, or on flags, but later an iron plate raised a few inches above the floor and having a grill in the centre for ventilation was used.

Two other features are commonly found in the back wall of the inglenook; a small rectangular cupboard was contrived in the thickness of the wall either left or right of the hearth, and about 4ft. above the floor; this was the salt-box, and provided perhaps the only place in the house where salt would keep dry.

The other was the bread-oven, likewise built into the wall, but having a larger opening some 3ft. above the floor.

The interior was beehive-shaped and had neither fire nor flue, the heat being provided by the insertion and ignition of dry twigs or "garsel". When these had burnt out, thoroughly heating the oven, the ashes were removed and the bread inserted, the aperture was closed by a heavy wooden or stone door, and the bread cooked by the latent heat of the oven; a good example may be seen at the old Spout House, Bilsdale.

There are of course numerous variations from the stock plan above described; at Carr Cote for example the inglenook is in the gable-wall, the space to the right of the speer having been occupied by a narrow staircase; and in one of the rooms at Broadway Foot, Hawnby, where the entrance to the room is on the right of the inglenook the opening to the (now-vanished) bread-oven is in the left wall, the oven having formed an external projection from the back wall of the house.

A recess adjoining the living-room at Oak Crag, Farndale, now used as a larder, must originally have been a box-bed. It is enclosed by 16th or early 17th century panelling with a "stable" door. There is (or was until recently) a recess at Duck House similarly panelled.

I referred above to the vertical post under the chimney-beam known as the witch-post. This was not of oak, like the other timbers, but of rowan-tree. This tree (says Brewer) was greatly venerated by the

Druids, and was called the 'Witchen' by the early Britons, because it was supposed to ward off witches.

Standing as it did between the doorway and the hearth, the witch-post was felt to give adequate protection, but to make doubly sure, it was the practice in some dales to have a St. Andrew's cross incised in the post just below the chimney-beam. (6)

This is said to have been done by the parish priest, giving it added sanctity, but why a St. Andrew's cross was used I am unable to say.

A very plain example can be seen at Oak Crag, but in Glaisdale the carving was more elaborate; at Quarry Farm there is some curious fluted carving below the cross, and Mrs. Mary Nattrass, in her excellent article "Witch Posts and Early Dwellings in Cleveland" (7), illustrates an example from Danby now in the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford; besides hearts and phases of the moon between the arms of the cross, this has five convex rolls or billets below it.

Mrs. Nattrass quotes from a report of the Whitby Naturalists Club who visited Stangend (where there is one such billet) in 1946: "no answer was forthcoming when it was asked what was the significance of the billets. Why should one witch-post have two, another one, and others as many as six and even eleven of these horizontal bands?"

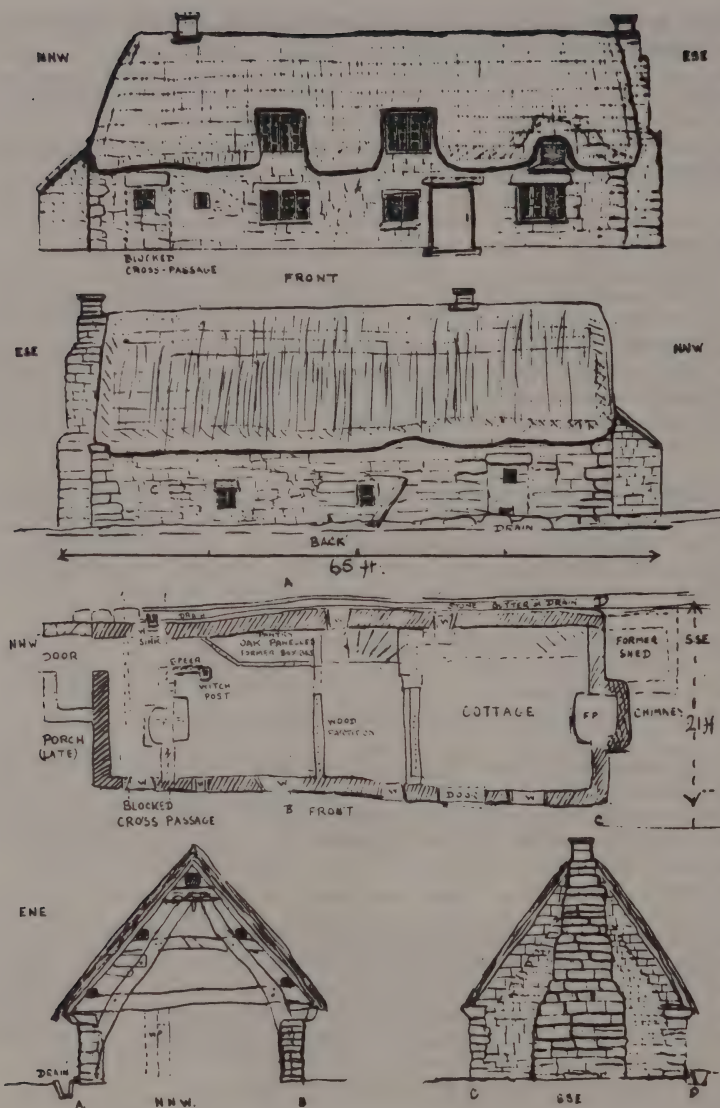
Other (but plainer) cross-incised witch-posts at Lanes Farm, Glaisdale, Bugle Cottage, Egton, and Delves Cottage near Egton, and one from East End Cottage, Egton removed to Whitby Museum when the cottage was demolished, are mentioned by Mrs. Nattrass.

So much significance was, until comparatively recent years, attached to witch-posts that when a house was re-built the owner was at pains to preserve the post and have it built into the new house. Perhaps common or other manorial rights appurtenant to the holding were thought to be perpetuated by the retention of the witch-post as the focus of the dwelling.

Examples of cruck houses of the longhouse type in this district are Spout House above referred to (but the cow-house end has been rebuilt), Broadway Foot (much altered), Stangend (Danby), and Oak Crag, Farnedale. Duck House, Farnedale, an excellent example, has recently undergone a remodelling which has utterly destroyed its character; the barn end of Stangend has suffered sadly of late at the hands of the farmer, and the living end is vacant and rapidly decaying.

A cruck house at Sutton-under-Whitestonecliff, formerly the Seven Stars Inn, may have been a longhouse, and the owner-occupier, Mr. Hall, informs me that the front walls were until recent years of oak studding filled with wattle and daub on a low stone plinth.

A recent inspection of Sike House on Hawnby Moor (now in ruins) reveals signs that it was originally a longhouse, though the gables have



A FINE EXAMPLE OF A MEDIEVAL LONG HOUSE

OAK CRAG HOUSE, FARNDALE. A typical cruck-built Longhouse (dwelling portion only survives). Drawn by R. H. Hayes, 1963.

been raised and the crucks have disappeared; the room at the east end had a two-light mullioned window, indicating a date prior to 1700, and a shallow projection on the north side suggests the position of a box-bed.

Other cruck-houses (not of longhouse type) in the neighbourhood are the Manor House, Harome, a splendid thatched example but hideously mutilated by a recent owner; a timber framed house near the bridge at Sutton-under-Whitestonecliff dated 1655, a pretty thatched cottage at Rievaulx absurdly named Swiss Cottage, the Star Inn, Harome (thatched) and others in that village, several at Pockley, one at Beadlam and the thatched Plough Inn at Wombledon.

Few if any of these attractive dwellings are scheduled for preservation, and the only hope for them is that they may come into the hands of discriminating owners.

An instance of the converse has occurred recently at Wrelton, where the walls of an interesting cruck house have been raised so as entirely to destroy their significance, and the old carved and dated corbel-stones have actually been built in half-way down the walls.

There is perhaps still hope for the manor House at Harome, very little for Stangend and none for Sike House, but as long as people of sensibility keep on the alert to buy and preserve wherever possible, a few may still be saved, and they will have a rewarding experience in every sense of the word.

* * * * *

NOTES

- (1) Experiments are now being made in radio-carbon tests for cruck timbers, however, which should produce useful results. (Ed.)
- (2) James Walton, Homesteads of the Yorkshire Dales (Dalesman publication).
- (3) 'Hansel' - to inaugurate, to be the first user of.
- (4) Transactions of the Ancient Monument Society
- (5) Broadway Foot, Hawnby
- (6) See J. Ford, Some Reminiscences and Folk Lore of Danby Parish and District (1953), p. 95
- (7) Yorks. Arch. Journal, Pt. 153, 1956, p. 136 et seq.

THE 'WATERWORKS' OF BYLAND ABBEY

by

J. McDonnell and Dom M. R. Everest, O. S. B.

The diversions of the River Rye carried out by the monks of Rievaulx have been traced and recorded by H. A. Rye and J. Weatherill⁽¹⁾. The objects of these adaptations of the river's natural flow varied from land drainage and sanitation to transportation and (later) power; unlike many monasteries (and most castles), however, Rievaulx may have been able to dispense with fish-ponds and rely wholly on the produce of her sea and river fisheries.

By contrast, little attempt has apparently been made to study the rather more ambitious 'waterworks' carried out in the Wass-Coxwold area of North Yorkshire by the monks of Byland. The present article aims simply to describe the effect of their activities on the topography of the district, and to put on paper the few known or deducible facts, as a foundation perhaps for some eventual study of the question on a fuller and more technical basis.

We are reasonably familiar with the story of the early peregrinations of the Cistercians who eventually became the Byland community - from Furness to Hood Grange, Hood to Old Byland, Old Byland to 'Stocking' (probably Oldstead Hall)⁽²⁾, and finally, in 1177, to the site we know as Byland Abbey. The construction of this eventual monastery and abbey church in itself involved ambitious, and successful, schemes to control water on the low-lying site⁽³⁾. Such was the swampy nature of the terrain that much of the thirty years' residence of the community at Stocking was spent in massive and extensive drainage - per fossas longas et latas magnas aquas de paludibus extrahere, in the words of the third abbot as printed in Dugdale⁽⁴⁾ - before building operations for the great abbey could begin.

1. The Geological Background - The chosen site of Byland Abbey demanded skilful use of the physical environment. The provision of an adequate water supply for all the needs of a large community and their animals, and the associated land drainage schemes, necessitated notable engineering projects. From the first the geological situation determining the lie of the land with all its assets and liabilities was appreciated, and it was exploited with uncommon skill.

The surroundings of the abbey at the head of the Vale of Mowbray provide some striking scenery. The Hambleton Hills rise abruptly to the north. These moors are capped by a porous calcareous gritstone, an oolite of the Jurassic system, and are underlaid by an impervious bed of Oxford Clay⁽⁵⁾. These strata combine to cause a fine spring line, which is particularly evident in the two small dales notched into the moor edge - Cockerdale and Ducken Dale.

In contrast to the flat relief of the moors, the topography of the Vale is more varied. Under the main fault scarp near Oldstead are some out-

lier hills separated by deep valleys caused by faulting and modified by the raging torrents of glacial meltwaters. Smaller hills represent residuals of Kimmeridge Clay which is the bedrock of the floor of the valley. On the low ground the naturally hummocky ill-drained undulations and the extensive deposits of Boulder Clay and Gravels testify typically to extensive glaciation. Across the rift valley, to the south, lie the Howardian Hills, which represent a much faulted continuation of the moors.

There are no rivers flowing through the area, and the streams stem mainly from the springs of the moorland escarpment. Their courses, prior to monastic intervention, lay mainly eastwards as misfits in the beds of great glacial meltwater channels. Out of these valleys the streams followed a sluggish and meandering course into the Vales of Pickering, to the east, and Mowbray, to the west.

Economically the rocks have no great importance. The moorland gritstone makes a moderate building stone, and the clays have been baked for bricks and tiles in more recent times, while the gravels provided good hard core material. The soils vary widely. The brashy soils of the exposed moorlands offer few prospects beyond sheep grazing and forestry. In the Vale the cold Kimmeridge Clay gives scant encouragement to the farmer with a plough, though the stiff Boulder Clays give better, if hard won, results. The soils of former lake beds and swamps, once drained, are naturally fertile, as can still be seen in the reclaimed land below the Long Beck⁽⁶⁾.

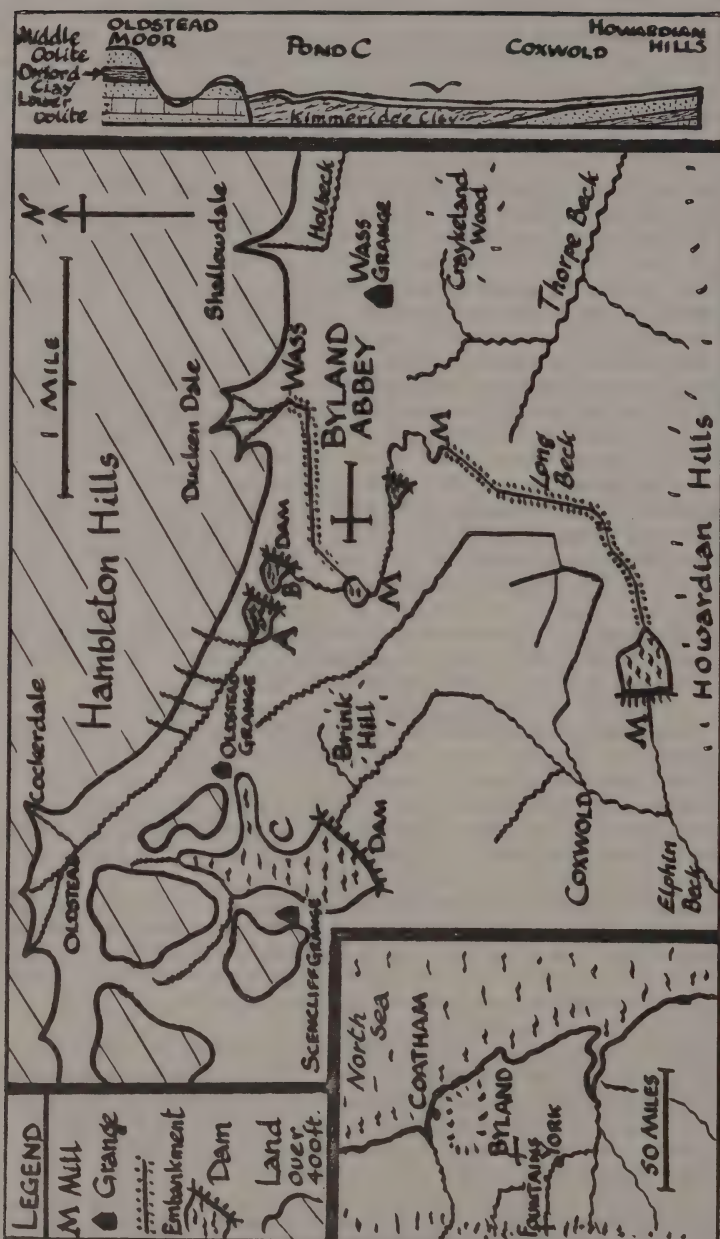
II. Water Supply - The water supply of the area depends entirely on the local springs and the rainfall run-off in the area. In this respect the contribution of the Howardian Hills is negligible.

The run-off from the Hambleton Hills is very slight. The rocks are highly porous and well covered with vegetation. Further, in the Middle Ages they probably enjoyed a denser and richer flora to absorb the rainfall and further check the run-off⁽⁷⁾. Only exceptionally heavy rains and snow melting over frozen ground would make notable, and probably dangerous, contributions to the flow of the streams in the Vale.

With the exception of parts of the outlier hills, the valley is covered by impervious clays. Lakes, swamps and waterlogged land abounded on account of the lack of gradient of the streams. Their flow depended on rainfall, and constituted for the monastic engineer more of a liability than an asset with the problems of flood and drought.

The springs of the moor hillside provided the bulk of the economic water supply with their dependable flow. (The present streams belie their mediaeval potential as they are extensively tapped by various undertakings). Moreover the climate of the Middle Ages, besides being even more unpredictable, certainly averaged a rather more abundant rainfall than to-day to feed the springs⁽⁸⁾.

The gift of 'Bella Landa', to be honest, did not offer brilliant prospects. The key to making a viable monastic site lay in the control of



water. This had to be achieved by draining the land and capturing and diverting the spring-fed streams. The extent and lasting success of the monastic endeavours reflect work of rare vision, skill and industry. This work can be most conveniently considered under the separate headings of becks, mills and fish-ponds.

III. Becks - To the mediaeval eye, the Coxwold-Gilling Gap resembled its larger neighbour to the east, the Vale of Pickering, in that it was composed of islands of slightly higher and dryer ground amid a clayey morass. Such islands were Coxwold itself, Kilburn, Thorpe Grange, and wooded hills with Danish names like Brink, Rosebergh and Crayke-land (Crafclynt in the charters). The new abbey site boasted no such eminence, but lay, sodden and scrub-covered, between the Hambleton escarpment and a low ridge to the south, a depressing example of the unwanted waste in which the early Cistercians always sought to establish themselves.

The 'long, broad ditches' cut and built by the monks there were planned with foresight. They served not merely to drain the building site, while at the same time providing an adequate head of water for drinking, and eventually for milling purposes, but also to take unwanted surface water off the land to the south and east of the new abbey, which had been gifted to them by Roger de Mowbray ⁽⁹⁾. Even to-day inspection on the ground shows clearly enough that hardly a single beck in the area between Wildon and Thorpe Granges runs in its natural channel; moreover, two of the biggest becks - Thorpe Beck and Holbeck - which originally rose near Oldstead and in Ducken Dale respectively, were entirely diverted near their sources. The truncated modern streams that bear these names still flow out eastwards to the Rye, but their original headwaters were carried southwest past Coxwold into the Vale of York.

The question of exactly when these diversions were carried out needs further investigation. It seems impossible that they should be later than the 13th century, because there is no adequate alternative source of water for the fish-pond at Newburgh, which was certainly in existence in 1222 ⁽¹⁰⁾. While the Cistercians were clearing the site for their abbey, their principal benefactor, Roger de Mowbray, was giving all the land to the southwest of them - that is, south and south-east of Coxwold - to another monastic foundation, the Augustinian Priory of Newburgh. Perhaps the oddest feature of the modest quantity of charters and other documents relating to the two monasteries which have so far come to light, is the absence of any negotiations between them as to the disposal of this water which Byland must have been re-directing across Newburgh land. It was not necessarily an unwelcome gift; the former Holbeck's water was used by Newburgh to supply its fish-pond, which in turn powered the mill below it. Yet it is strange that the two communities, which had such frequent recourse to legal action over rights of pasture, enclosure and access to their overlapping properties, should have avoided disputes over water. Perhaps the best working hypothesis, in default of any positive evidence for a later date for these diversions, is that they were carried out almost

immediately on the Cistercians' arrival at Stocking (1147), when the Augustinians, who had arrived at Newburgh a year or two earlier, would have been busy organising their own economy and amenable disposed to this offer of a water supply for the springless foot of the Howardian ridge. It may quite possibly have been a joint effort by both houses, with the approval of Roger de Mowbray. But we do not even know for certain who raised the former Holbeck ⁽¹¹⁾, renamed Mikelbek in later charters, and now known as Long Beck, on to its embankment south of Low Pasture House, so that the water could carry to the great fishpond at Newburgh.

IV. Mills - The turning of waste water off their farmland-to-be and abbey site was only half the object of the thrifty Cistercians. Even this water, as it flowed, could provide drinking supply and sanitation disposal, and also turn mill-wheels. (The Cistercian rule originally forbade the owning of mills as it did the eating of fish, but both ordinances, though perhaps practicable at Cîteaux, seem to have been quickly discarded in the North Riding; site-development, the carving of economically viable farms from the waste, demanded all available manpower, we may assume, and left no room for time-wasting archaisms like the grinding of corn by hand-querns when the job could be better done by water-power).

Byland in due course acquired mills in several of her granges: Wildon, Old Byland (Cadell or Cairedale Mill), probably Scackleton and Airyholme (Hovingham). By the Dissolution, the Abbey itself had two mills in its immediate vicinity: a water-cornmill actually within the precincts and a walk-mill (i.e. for cloth-fulling) not far away ⁽¹²⁾. It seems, however, that this fulling-mill was the original abbey cornmill. Various charters ⁽¹³⁾ of the 14th century and earlier mention 'the pool of the monks' mill' - no mention of a second one - as a boundary mark for the confines of Thorpe Grange, which then extended further west than the present township of Thorpe-le-Willows, into Wass territory. The context of these boundary descriptions and an examination of the ground show that Low Pasture House (grid ref. SE 552783) fulfils the conditions for the mill site. The farmhouse itself lies in an artificial hollow, and there are traces of a race, a small weir and a large dam upstream of it.

Meantime, more water had been brought to the Abbey itself from the glacial channel linking Oldstead with Wass. An artificial cut still runs under the Oldstead road and the outbuildings of College Farm, west of the Abbey, to join the equally man-made and embanked channel that brings the former Holbeck headwaters from Wass, westwards to the abbey precinct before turning temporarily southeast again on its way to Low Pasture House. (The old bed of the Holbeck is still traceable both on the 6" O.S. map and on the ground: it came from Ducken Dale, south through Wass village, between the present embankment and the road, and then turned east where the road to Byland turns sharply west).

The second, and eventually the main corn-mill, then, was served by the former source of the Holbeck, augmented by surface drainage off the Hambleton escarpment collected in the ponds of the glacial channel WNW of the Abbey. The stagnum or mill-pond can be traced on the

ground through its dam, remains of which still rise several feet high in the meadow between College Farm and the group of cottages WSW of the Abbey Church. The westernmost of these cottage (Mr. Buckle's) has a very large millstone for a doorstep, and almost certainly stands on the site of the mill.

V. Fishponds - Byland acquired sea-fisheries at Coatham (Tees-mouth) and river-fisheries on the Swale at Cundall and Fawdington, northeast of Boroughbridge. The former were at least two days' journey away by packhorse, the latter one day. It was plainly advisable, for a large community, to have a reserve near at hand for use in time of dearth or bad weather, as had Newburgh and Gilling Castle. They, like Byland and unlike Rievaulx and Fountains, had no good fishing river running past the door.

The two ponds (possibly three: landslips have obscured the exact topography here) in the Oldstead-Byland glacial channel mentioned above (A and B on plan) were probably the earliest fishponds. Mediaeval pisciculture was primitive, but a few references survive of bream or pike being supplied to stock such ponds ⁽¹⁴⁾; this conjures visions of large tubs of Swale or Foss water lurching on flat carts over the old road through Coxwold. The Byland ponds were created by the construction of clay and earth dams, with a sluice in the middle; the lower dam, just west of College Farm, was made sufficiently wide and strong to carry a cart-road connecting the Abbey, via Cold Cam, with its properties in and around Old Byland.

As the numbers grew, however, these ponds proved incapable of carrying stocks large enough to provide a reserve for the whole community. The Cistercian waterworks expert - there must have been at least one, of considerable skill and with a good eye for levels - soon had to choose another site, with a new source of water, where the bounds of the Stocking (Oldstead) grant marched with those of Kilburn. The area to be covered by this new barrage, in another glacial valley (C on plan), spreads south and east from the ridge to the south of Oldstead village, referred to in the charters as 'Seleclyve', a name preserved in the modern Scencliff Grange (SE 527793). This valley broadens out as it approaches the level floor of the Gap. between Fox Folly farm and Brink Hill, and the containing dam had to be nearly a quarter of a mile long. This massive structure, built again of earth and clay, but with a lot of stone apparent in its core, still stands over twenty feet high, and was probably another ten feet higher to begin with. It remains among the most impressive earthworks definitely attributable to monastic industry, retaining as it did a piece of water half a mile long by a quarter of a mile at its widest point, and some thirty feet deep.

Fortunately the customary dearth of documentation with regard to Byland Abbey is not so prevalent in this instance, and we have the full text of deeds fixing the date of construction of this pond ⁽¹⁵⁾:

"Robert (d'Ayville) also grants that the Abbot and his successors may freely establish, build and repair a

vivary pond at their will on his land opposite Cambesheved (modern Cams Head farm)... with enough way round the vivary for fishing and drawing nets on the side of Robert's land; and so that the pond may have at the head ... six perticates (rod, pole, perch), with a perticate of twenty feet, from the bottom of the valley across Robert's land towards Killeburne... And the Abbot may freely assart (enclose waste land) so far as the water goes up, in length as in breadth, between the said pond and the road leading from the Abbey to Killeburne; but so that if the water shall go up beyond the road, they shall remake the road..."

(This last provision turned out to be unnecessary. The Cistercian surveyor had calculated right; the water behind the dam rose just above the 300ft. contour line, and the road - roughly the present by-road from Byland via Oldstead - remained high and dry).

The document quoted is dated 1234/35. Two years later a supplementary right was established ⁽¹⁶⁾, that "the Abbot may strengthen and repair a vivary dam on the land of Thomas (de Colevill, lord of Coxwold) ... to wit, in Cukewald between Cambesheved and the road leading from Willedon to the Abbey". This indicates that the dam had meantime been built, and the pond probably stocked. The Wildon-Byland road mentioned survives as the bridle-path which crosses the valley mouth some hundred yards below the dam.

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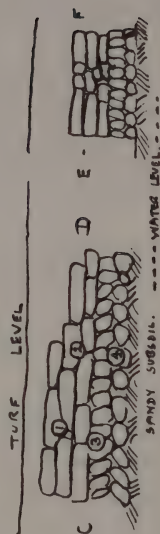
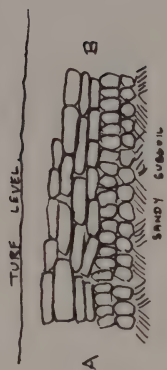
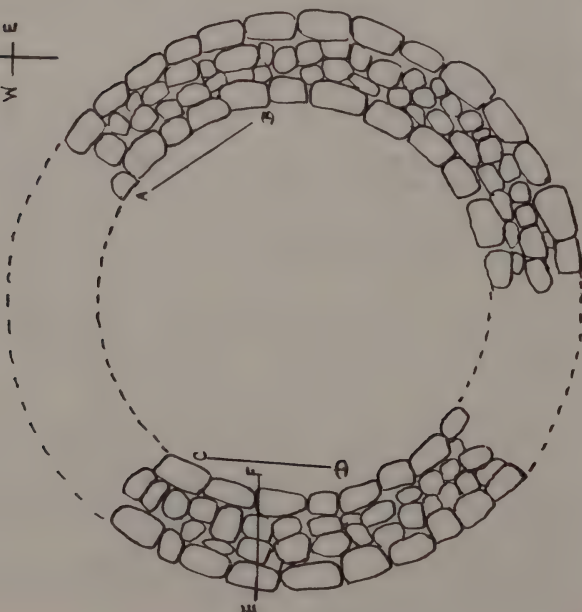
Thus, within sixty years of the move to their final settlement, the monks of Byland had equipped themselves with drinking water, sanitation, properly drained arable lands on the clay of the Coxwold-Gilling Gap, an efficient mill-pond, and ample fishponds. It is even conceivable that nearly all these waterworks were planned and directed by one man. If so, his pre-eminence as a water engineer is shown by the fact that his work lasted with little supplementation until the Dissolution of the Monasteries; much of it, indeed, like the embanked Long Beck, is still in operation to-day.

NOTES

- (1) Rye in Yorks. Arch. Journal vol. 57, 1900; Weatherill in ibid. Pt. 151, 1954.
- (2) All the evidence points to Oldstead (the veterem locum of one document); the case for Oldstead Hall rather than the village or the grange, as the site where the monks built 'a stone church and a cloister', is supported by the discovery in recent years of fragments of tiles and of stone columns about 3" diameter in the grounds of the Hall.
- (3) There is, however, a hint in Yorks. Arch. Journal vol. 9, p. 395, that the abbey church was not structurally well-found even after the draining operations were complete.
- (4) Mon. Angl. 1859 ed., V. 353
- (5) Geological Survey of England and Wales. Sheets 52, 53. (Drift). 1912.
- (6) Everest M. R. "A gift of the ice", in Ampleforth Journal vol. LXII, ii (1957).
- (7) Turrill W. R., British Plant Life, 1948, p. 48
- (8) Manley G., Climate and the British Scene, 1952, p. 279
- (9) Dugdale, op. cit. V, 348
- (10) Idem. VI, 318
- (11) Still so called, apparently, in William de Mowbray's confirmation of his grandfather's grant to Newburgh; Dugdale, op. cit. VI 318
- (12) Idem. V, 354. (Dissolution survey and rents respectively).
- (13) Idem. V, 348 (Thos. de Mowbray's confirmation): Egerton MS (BM.) 2823, f 36: Wombwell MSS (Hist. MSS Comm., Report on MSS in Various Collections, vol. II, 1903) p. 5
- (14) E. g. Close Rolls (PRO), Henry III, 1242-47, p. 328. (We are indebted to Mr. A. H. Whitaker for this reference, which concerns a gift by the King to the Abbot of Byland from the royal fishpond of Fosse (Foss Islands, York), and very probably relates to the stocking of the Seleclyve pond itself); Durham Accounts Rolls (Surtees Soc. vol. 103) III 604.
- (15) Yorks. Arch. Soc. Record Series vol. 67 (Yorkshire Fines 1232-46) pp. 32-3; Egerton MS. 2823, f. 53.
- (16) Yorks. Fines 1232-46, p. 45

A CIRCULAR FOUNDATION AT THORMANBY N.R.Y.

S.E. 493746



R.H.H. 1960

EXCAVATION REPORT by Raymond H. Hayes

A CIRCULAR FOUNDATION AT THORMANBY, N.R. YORKS.

In March 1960 the late Mrs. N. Knowles of Crayke, who did much useful work in recording and finding sites in the district, took me to see a circular foundation SW of the village of Thormanby, at 493746. The field in which it was found lies four miles north of Easingwold, to the west of the main Thirsk-Easingwold road - a supposed Roman road line. The land is sandy, with a little clay to the south, and almost stoneless soil.

Mr. J. Swires of Fir Tree Farm, the owner, was willing to let us excavate what remained of the foundation. He said there was no surface trace visible when he cut through it with a mechanical drainer after ploughing the field, which slopes gently towards the south and is only about 120ft. above ordnance datum. The field has no special name, but on the lower ground to the south he cut through what he described as a moat. It was at least 5ft. in depth, with a dark peaty filling, in which two or three oak posts or piles were set upright. He showed us one of these, and it appeared to be carbonised. There were patches of black soil, impregnated with charcoal, round the ditch.

The circular foundation was 21ft. external diameter, 14ft. internal; the walls 3'6" in thickness with good facing stones and a rubble core. They were built on top of a double layer of cobble pitching, and stood to a height of 3'-3'9" on the sandy subsoil. The cobbles resembled glacial drift material, and several showed signs of burning prior to their use as a footing. The walling, three or four courses high, was constructed of slabs of limestone (Hambleton oolite) obtained about 3 or 4 miles to the NE. There was no sign of the use of mortar; clay was probably the binding.

The E and SE sides were intact; less remained of the W side, and the drainer had made large gaps to north and south. We removed two sections of the walling to the subsoil. A-B (see plan) gave a section showing the constructional details, and the pitching carefully made. The others, C-D and E-F, gave a similar section, and here we found four potsherds. No. 1, in the loose upper stonework, was a small fragment showing a spot of brown glaze; no. 2 was a tiny scrap of brown ware; no. 3, in the pitching, was a base fragment of coarse sandy grey ware, not unlike Roman pottery; no. 4 was a scrap of red ware. In the field Mrs. Knowles found a few pieces of green-glazed medieval ware and a portion of a flanged tile of the kind known as Roman 'tegula' or roofing tiles.

The only certain medieval sherd (no. 1) was in such a position that it could have arrived when the foundation was already a ruin or buried in earth. The rest are of uncertain date.

The structure is of a type not unlike Roman work, especially the pitching of the footings. On the other hand, the earliest stone foundation of the medieval hall at Spaunton (note 1) is of limestone slabs laid on

pitched slabs.

When the site was reported to the Ancient Monuments Dept. at York, they sent out an observer who reported he could give no definite opinion apart from the suggestion that it could be a pinfold. Mr. Swires doubted this, saying it was too small. He and some friends dug in the centre of the foundation and found nothing apart from a few bones, one of which the local doctor thought to be human. We found nothing further, the ground being deeply disturbed by earlier digging and by the drainer. Water appeared 6"-9" below the footings.

It is difficult on the slender evidence to give any opinion on the date of the structure. Circular buildings of this type and size have been found on Romano-British sites, usually temples or shrines; one was a circular walled henge for burial. On the other hand, at Langton Roman villa ⁽²⁾ a circular foundation, internal diameter 15'9", was thought to have been a horse- or donkey-mill for corn-grinding. Our site was of similar dimensions. It is unlikely that it could have been the foundation for a windmill, as there is higher ground (175ft. O. D.) to the N. E. Another possible suggestion is that of a circular dove-cote ⁽³⁾.

Thormanby - Tormozbi in Domesday, 1086 - implies a Norse settlement, 'Thormoth's farm' ⁽⁴⁾. In the time of Edward the Confessor, 1½ carucates of land in Thormanby were in the soke of Easingwold, and held by another Norseman, Aschetil, working two ploughs. After the Conquest Thormanby was held by Robert de Malet for the King, and it was waste.

Whellan ⁽⁵⁾ quoting Gill ⁽⁶⁾ says "on top of the hill with an extensive view is an ivy-bound castle, no doubt a place of note, but its history is buried in oblivion". Victoria County History ⁽⁷⁾ says "no documentary evidence for this castle has been found". A Hall is mentioned in 1586 ⁽⁸⁾.

The Church of St. Mary the Virgin is a small, much restored building of the 12th century without aisles; the north aisle was added, and the east end of the chancel rebuilt about 1200.

The circular foundation could belong to any of the periods suggested, but it is not impossible in this district that there should be a Roman building in the vicinity.

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NOTES

- (1) "A Medieval Hall at Spaunton" by R.H. Hayes, unpublished report (note in Medieval Archaeology).
- (2) Roman Malton and District Report, No. 4, p. 40
- (3) Victoria County History (North Riding) II, 478.
- (4) Smith, Place-names of the North Riding, 1928, p. 26
- (5) Whellan & Co., History and Topography of the North Riding, 1844, quoting -
- (6) Gill, Vallis Eboracensis (and Fletcher, Picturesque History of Yorkshire).
- (7) as (3) above, p. 207
- (8) idem, p. 208.

NOTES ON RYEDALE CHURCHES, I. KIRKDALE.

A NEW THEORY ON THE SAXON GRAVESTONES

by Cyril King

Kirkdale is most famed for its inscribed Saxon sundial which not only dates the foundation of the present church (c. 1060) but tells of a yet earlier church - St. Gregory's Minster - the ruins of which existed upon the site at that time. But perhaps of even greater popular appeal are the two mysterious carved stones which now lie under the nave arcade. At one time these were embedded in the exterior of the west wall and were still in that location when, about a century ago, Haigh claimed (1) to have read upon one of them the inscription in Runic characters "Cyning Oethilwald".

This brought about a storm of protest for it meant in effect that here was evidence of the monastery founded by St. Cedd in 654 being located at Kirkdale rather than at Lastingham as hitherto thought. (It was Ethelwald, King of Deira, who requested that St. Cedd, a missionary from St. Aidan's Lindisfarne school, build a monastery wherein Ethelwald might be buried when he died. The story is recounted by Bede who informs us that in 654, St. Cedd duly founded such a monastery at Lastingham). But there were those who vigorously supported Haigh and believed the stone in question to be the coffin lid of Ethelwald, assigning it to the 7th century. Such was their enthusiasm that the other stone was said to be the coffin lid of St. Cedd himself.

Opinion was divided and the rival claims of Lastingham and Kirkdale became the subject of much bitter controversy. Some affirmed that the inscription was in fact genuine whilst others were equally certain that no such writing could be traced. Those who championed the cause of Kirkdale found themselves confronted with seemingly insurmountable difficulties. Not only did Bede name Lastingham as the place, but also clearly stated that the stone church subsequently built upon the site was dedicated to St. Mary. The Kirkdale sundial is equally emphatic that the early church at Kirkdale was dedicated to St. Gregory. Furthermore, Bede's description of the site more aptly applies to Lastingham than it does to Kirkdale. Nevertheless, undismayed, the Kirkdale adherents ingeniously - perhaps over-ingeniously - disposed of these and other difficulties. But their arguments were weak and the Kirkdale theory gradually fell into disfavour. Although Haigh was never actually denounced, it was thought that he was mistaken or had confused his notes, and to-day most authorities think that the two gravestones have no connection with King Ethelwald or St. Cedd and that Lastingham was indeed the true site of St. Cedd's monastery.

It is not the purpose here to take sides, nor to reopen the century old argument, but rather to show that Haigh's inscription may well be accepted as genuine without any of the attendant difficulties hitherto imagined, and moreover, to offer a solution which would be equally acceptable to both the Kirkdale and the Lastingham supporters.

Let it be assumed that Lastingham was in fact the site of St. Cedd's monastery which was founded in 654 and continued to flourish for more than 200 years. Then, towards the end of the 9th century, in common with so many other churches, Lastingham fell a victim to Danish raiders. The resident monks - or at least those who escaped - fled, and as was common practice in those days, took with them their sacred relics which no doubt included the remains of their founder St. Cedd, and of their patron King Ethelwald. The dispossessed brethren sought refuge in the neighbouring monastery at Kirkdale, and settling with the monks there, reinterred the remains of St. Cedd and Ethelwald, and fashioned the grave slabs which were intended either as coffin lids, or to be placed on the ground over the graves. Soon afterwards Kirkdale doubtless suffered the same fate as Lastingham, but it would appear that this onslaught was even more terrible for not only was the church destroyed but most, if not all, of the inmates were slain. And so Kirkdale remained deserted and in ruins for almost two centuries.

It was about the year 1060 that Orm, the founder of the present church, rebuilt upon the ruins of the former St. Gregory's Minster. Doubtless too, it was he who came across the carved grave slabs of St. Cedd and King Ethelwald, and appreciating their great beauty and artistic merit, had them built into the west wall of his church. There they remained until the year 1907 when they were removed and placed within the church in their present position.

If the above is correct it would date the stones about two centuries later than the Kirkdale school had hitherto thought. But this agrees with the late W. G. Collingwood, the eminent authority on Saxon stones who examined them in 1907 and 1911, when he denied that there was any good reason for connecting the stones with St. Cedd or King Ethelwald, and dated them up to two, or even three hundred years later⁽²⁾.

Despite having shown that Haigh's reading could well have been correct, it still remains uncertain whether there ever was such an inscription. Curiously enough, it was Haigh himself who brought about his own defeat by proclaiming Kirkdale to be the true site of St. Cedd's monastery. Neither he nor his followers could accept such an inscription as genuine without this conclusion, which was indeed unfortunate because his opponents who denied the inscription were largely influenced by the difficulties arising from accepting Kirkdale as the site.

To-day the stones are regarded with curiosity and perhaps fascination, but little credence is given to the supposed writing of a century ago. One would like to think that they were in fact the coffin lids of St. Cedd and King Ethelwald, and from what has been said there may be some encouragement, some grounds for asking "Was Haigh right after all?".

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NOTES

- (1) See G. Frank, Ryedale & North Yorkshire Antiquities, 1888, pp. 136-7, 142.
- (2) Yorkshire Archaeological Journal, XIX, 344, and XXI, 287. See also Collingwood's Northumbrian Crosses of the pre-Norman age, 1927.

NOTES AND QUERIES

(1) REPAIRS TO THE AQUEDUCT AT BONFIELD GILL

by J. N. Grayson

During the summer and autumn of 1964 several members and friends of the society carried out work upon the aqueduct near Bonfield Gill.

This stone structure was built almost two hundred years ago to carry the Piethorn-Nawton watercourse across the stream there. Over the past few years, however, the stonework was very severely damaged by vandalism, and the writer realised with concern that unless extensive repairs were carried out quickly, the whole structure would soon cease to exist. It was felt that every effort should be made to restore and preserve a feature which was unique in this district.

Accordingly, the situation was brought to the attention of the society, who agreed to undertake the work provided sufficient help was available. The response to our appeal was most gratifying. Members and friends entered into the spirit of the thing, and turned up cheerfully on a number of occasions to undertake this very hard work. It entailed carrying bags of cement, tools etc. over rough moorland before the more strenuous work upon the aqueduct itself could begin.

Repairs were carried out first upon the eastern pier, which was less severely damaged than the other. The structure consisted of a stone casing with an earth and rubble fill. Much of this had been thrown down into the stream and the top four feet of the pier needed to be completely rebuilt. To do this, large stones had to be recovered from the stream and lifted into position on the pier. The centre was then filled with earth and small stones, and the topmost course of stone was cemented into place to try to prevent the damage recurring. A thin layer of soil was then scattered over the top and seeded down with grass.

On the western pier a similar procedure was followed, but here, as much of the original stone had been washed downstream and was missing, we had to bring new stone from a nearby site probably quarried by the original builders. On this side, also, the remaining trough sections which were found during the reconstruction were placed on top of the final grassed-down soil fill.

It was felt that by erecting wooden notice boards at either side, stating "200 year-old aqueduct", further damage might be prevented. This was therefore done.

When the restoration work was finally complete, an application was made to the Ministry of Works to schedule the aqueduct as an ancient monument. This application is at present under consideration. If it is agreed, the structure will receive a measure of legal protection which as yet it cannot enjoy.

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Side view of the restored aqueduct in Bonfield Gill. The piers stand 10' above the beck, and the water flowed over it from west to east.

NOTE: The Nawton watercourse, of which the Bonfield Gill aqueduct is a feature, is described and mapped in the History of Helmsley . . ., pp. 212-3, 216-7. As a matter of interest the diary there referred to (kept in the 1880's by Mr. George Wright, waterman for the Nawton course) shows that in those days too the aqueduct was in need of repair, and no water had passed over it for four years. In all probability these repairs would consist in renewing the wooden trough which spanned the stream from one stone pier to the other - of which trough, naturally, nothing now remains. The fact that the water supply was thus impeded for so long did not, however, mean that Nawton had to go without water altogether. The village managed solely on the supplementary supply which was drawn from higher up Bonfield Gill and entered the course at the eastern end of the aqueduct.

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(2) LOW-LYING BURIAL MOUNDS

The howes of the moorlands have survived in large numbers chiefly because the ground where they stand lay uncultivated after the prehistoric period and was not brought into inclosure until the 19th century. Since then, ploughing-up and forest planting have destroyed many mounds, but some had already been opened and the sites of others can be found from early Ordnance Survey and other local maps. Where the mounds stood within the area of mediaeval cultivation, or within the ancient inclosures of the villages, their chances of survival were much more slight, although some may still exist and others are recorded in field names. Howe Green and Howe Flatts at Kirkby Moorside lay behind the burial mound excavated c. 1823 and reported by the Rev. W. Eastmead to contain 12 burials. The large mound adjoining the main road at Hovingham, called Mutay Hill, scene of a riot in 1607, does not seem to have been excavated. It would be useful to know of other mounds, and field names recalling mounds, not least because their location may help to decide to what extent the pre-Anglian peoples cleared the lower ground, and whether they were originally responsible for founding the village sites which to-day bear Anglian and Scandinavian names.

J. H. R.

(3) BOUNDARY STONES

Another feature of the countryside of interest to explorers on the ground as well as in the documents are the boundary marks of estates, townships and even farms. More evident on the commons than in woods or ploughland, the howes, trees, stones and other features used to mark a boundary were once well-known and frequently perambulated to keep them clear. Some go back to the Anglian colonisation, while others were erected by 18th century inclosure commissioners. In many cases, the records of perambulations have not survived.

The perambulation of the manor of Scawton in 1688 is recorded in the documents at Hovingham Hall. Beginning at Campeshon Ing, the riders passed north-westwards over pastures and a runlett to the low side of King's Bank. The first bounder stone that they met was at Rosse intack by the wayside at the head of the dale. A line of 'mearestones' marked the moorland bounds, ending at a cast-up ditch at White Sleights pasture, and at Tom Smith's Cross the boundary turned towards the river Rye. Every turn was precisely indicated, and the boundary names reveal much that has been forgotten about the landscape. Where such documents do not survive, the challenge is even greater, but a careful survey of the ground following the boundary line of an early Ordnance map can bring to light the same forgotten features.

J. H. R.

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(4) TOM SMITH'S CROSS (Grid ref. 570811)

Who was Tom Smith? Was he a Sproxton farmer who carved up his wife with an axe and was subsequently hanged up by the long-vanished wayside cross? (If so, folk-memories are long, for as the last note emphasises the name was already there in the seventeenth century). Or did a certain Thomas establish a smithy beside the cross? Has anybody any hard facts to support these or any other theories?

J. McD.

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